

chats of food. Although the interaction between the chats and woodswallows occurred some distance from the observer (>100 m), it appeared to be similar to the kleptoparasitism described by Recher and Davis in 2005 (Corella 29:13–14). They observed Black-faced Woodswallows stealing lepidopteran larvae from Crimson Chats *E. tricolor* at Mt Magnet. We cannot, however, find a ready explanation for the food carrying behaviour of our chats. They were not nesting, they were not feeding, seasonal conditions were not conducive for breeding and there had been no previous records of chats in the area during 2004. What were they doing?

– MICHAEL and LESLEY BROOKER, PO Box 518, Kalamunda 6926

Perentie, *Varanus giganteus*, in Kalbarri National Park – On 11 November 2005, I observed and photographed an adult Perentie in Kalbarri National Park. The lizard was initially motionless in a boulder pile a few dozen metres from the top of the trail leading from Ross Graham Lookout down to the Murchison River. This is slightly outside of the published ranges for this species from Pianka, E.R. and King, D.R. (eds.). 2004 (*Varanoid Lizards of the World*) and Thompson, S.A., Withers, P.C., Thompson, G.G., and Robinson, D. 2005 (Range extension for the Perentie, *Varanus giganteus*. *Journal Royal*

*Society of Western Australia*, 88, pp. 41–43). The nearest sighting from Thompson *et al.* (2005) was where the Murchison River crosses the Great Northern Highway (Graham Thompson, personal communication), which is at least 20km east of my sighting. Pianka and King show only sightings still further to the east in this region.

– JOHN SULLIVAN, 873 Cedar Street, Pacific Grove, California 93950 USA

Status and pre-migrating aggregations of Tree Martins on Rottnest Island – The Tree Martin, *Hirundo nigricans* is regarded as a common and regular visitor to Rottnest Island with greatest numbers present during summer and early autumn (D. Saunders and P. de Rebeira, 1985, *The Birdlife of Rottnest Island*. Book published by the authors). Saunders and de Rebeira noted that in the late 1950's and early 1960's Tree Martins were then an uncommon visitor with only a few birds, usually less than five, visiting the island in most summers, but by the 1980's it was visiting in mobs of hundreds (600 plus) all over the island. Saunders and de Rebeira reported breeding in August 1983 in the wooden tower at Wagemup Hill and noted that few suitable breeding trees occur on Rottnest Island.

Regular visits since 2002 to

conduct reptile surveys has allowed confirmation that the current status of the Tree Martin on Rottnest Island is generally similar to that noted by Saunders and de Rebeira in the 1980's. However, Rottnest Island receives aggregations of many thousands of Tree Martins in autumn presumably prior to migration northwards.

Survey dates and number of sightings and total numbers of Tree Martins recorded are:

- 7-10 November 2002: nil
- 30 November-1 December 2002: 1 sighting, 150 individuals
- 14-16 March 2003: 4 sightings, 215 individuals
- 17-18 May 2003: 3 sightings, 8 individuals
- 31 May-2 June 2003: 11 sightings, 74 individuals
- 28-29 June 2003: 1 sighting, 200 individuals
- 25-27 July 2003: 4 sightings, 41 individuals
- 12-14 September 2003: 6 sightings, 39 individuals
- 28 February-1 March 2004: 7 sightings, 62 individuals
- 30 April-2 May 2004: 6 sightings, 44 individuals
- 14-15 May 2004: 1 sighting, 1 individual
- 15-17 October 2004: 1 sighting, 2 individuals
- 6-7 November 2004: nil
- 2-4 December 2004: 8 sightings, 46 individuals
- 4-7 March 2005: 10 sightings, 63 individuals plus group of ca. 2000 individuals roosting

overnight on eastern end of airport runway on 4-6 March

11-13 November 2005: nil

2-5 December 2005: 7 sightings, 55 individuals

24-26 February 2006: 14 sightings, 93 individuals plus 1000's on dunes at Porpoise Bay at 1800 hrs on 24 February (these may have moved to airport a little later in the evening), several thousand on eastern end of airstrip at dawn on 25 February, ca. 5000-6000 on eastern end of airstrip at dawn on 26 February

17-19 March 2006: hundreds on eastern end of airstrip at dawn on 18 and 19 March, large numbers scattered across entire island throughout the day on 18 March, many gathering towards sunset on eastern end of airstrip on 18 March

21-23 April 2006: 16 sightings, 243 individuals

17-19 November 2006: 6 sightings, 47 individuals

9-11 December 2006: 5 sightings, 14 individuals

20-21 December 2006: 5 sightings, 17 individuals plus ca.600-800 on eastern end of airstrip at dawn on 21 December.

On 25 February 2007 from 2000-2015 hours western daylight saving time, many thousands of Tree Martins were swarming high in the sky just north of Parker Point. Although the sun had already set and the light was rather dark, at least 4,000 to

5,000 Tree Martins were visible simultaneously against massive cumulo-nimbus clouds to the west. It is likely that many more were present as the swarming Tree Martins were extending across the clouds to either side from where the sun had set making visibility difficult against these dark clouds. Thunder and lightning was visible to the west and northwest. Although the swarming birds were generally moving in a northerly direction it was not possible to determine whether they continued in that direction as the light became too dark.

Thunder and lightning continued throughout the night and by dawn on 26 February there were storms to the west and north of the island which gradually extended to the east and moved over parts of the Perth Metropolitan Region. Although the eastern half of the island was traversed from dawn to 0900 hours via the southern road as far west as Wadgemup Hill and back via the Causeway no Tree Martins were sighted until *ca.*50 were seen perched in a dead tree near Bickley Bay at 0900hrs.

Three days before the sighting of the large aggregation, few Tree Martins were recorded although most roads on the eastern half of Rottnest were traversed and only 14 were recorded at Bulldozer Swamp in the late afternoon of 23 February. On 24 February Tree Martins had become fairly

numerous on Rottnest Island and at least 50 had roosted overnight on the eastern end of the airport runway, *ca.*150 were feeding around Porpoise Bay at 0930 hours, *ca.*15 were feeding at Lighthouse Swamp at 0945 hours, *ca.*80 were feeding over Lake Herschell and Pearce Lakes at 1015 hours, at least 20 were feeding over the settlement at Thompson Bay at 1100 hours, 6 were over Radar Hill near the west end of the island at 1200 hours, and 10 were over Green Island at 1230 hours.

On the morning of the large evening aggregation on 25 February at least 120 Tree Martins had roosted overnight on the eastern end of the airport runway, *ca.*50 were feeding at Lighthouse Swamp at 1000 hours, at least 95 were perched in the Tuart plantations near Bulldozer Swamp at 1030 hours, 3 were flying over Geordie Bay at 1200 hours and *ca.*30 were feeding around the base of Oliver Hill at 1230 hours.

Many of the birds seen on 24 and 25 February were juvenile with mottling on the white rumps. Presumably many of the Tree Martins visiting Rottnest Island in autumn are juveniles from the previous spring/summer breeding season on the southwest mainland.

The bitumen eastern end of the airport runway appears to be a regular late summer/autumn overnight roosting point for large numbers of Tree Martins as noted in February 2006 and 2007

and March 2005 and 2006, with lesser numbers noted in early summer, e.g. December 2006 (see above).

Autumn northward migration in Tree Martins has been noted elsewhere in southern Western Australia. At Faure Island in Shark Bay in May 2000 during the evenings Tree Martins congregated into spectacular groups of up to 1500 individuals to roost on the bare ground on red dunes on the north-west side of the island or in samphire flats towards the northern end of the island. The following mornings they remained on the ground until after sunrise before rising as a swarm and travelling north (J.

Dell and S. Cherriman, 2007. Birds of Faure Island, *Records of the Western Australian Museum Supplement*, in press).

Other large aggregations have also been noted at White Wells Station (now Charles Darwin Reserve) 74 kilometres north of Wubin when a flock of several thousand Tree Martins was recorded each day during thundery weather on 7-9 April 2005 (J. Dell, unpub.).

- JOHN DELL, Department of Environment and Conservation, PO Box K822, Perth, 6842 and ERIN HARRIS, Biota Environmental Sciences, 228 Carr Place, Leederville, 6007